



South Parkdale UHN Visioning Workshops Engagement Summary Report

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Prepared by: Olga Semenovych

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Overview

Between September and December 2025, the City of Toronto hosted a series of five in-person workshops with Housing Secretariat and Development Review staff, residents of the South Parkdale UHN Tenant Association (SPUHNTA), representatives from the University Health Network (UHN) and its Social Medicine Initiative and the Ward Councillor. The workshops focused on creating a community vision for the house-form properties identified as 74 and 82 Dunn Avenue, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 Close Avenue, and 74 and 78 Springhurst Avenue. The community vision consists of design principles and a development concept in the form of a massing drawing.

The workshops were organized and facilitated by Olga Semenovych, retained by the City of Toronto to provide engagement services, with supporting facilitators Cian Knights and Hernan Bianchi. This report is prepared by the facilitation team. The development concept drawings reviewed throughout the workshops were created by Brian Brownlie and Jordan Darnell from the architecture and design studio DTAH.

On average, 23 people participated in each workshop including SPUHNTA residents, the City of Toronto Housing Secretariat and Development Review staff, UHN Social Medicine Initiative leadership and staff, Ward Councillor's office representatives, and a partner at DTAH. In addition, SPUHNTA members convened a discussion prior to each workshop to gather input from residents that were unable to join the workshops.

This report provides a brief summary of the workshops, their outcomes, and discussion highlights. It is prepared with deep gratitude for the participants' time, care, and commitment to working together to create a meaningful visioning process.

Summary of Approach and Activities

The workshop series included an orientation workshop and four visioning workshops. The workshops used a co-design and trauma-informed approach. The orientation workshop provided an opportunity for participants to define the desired outcomes of the process, provide input on some aspects of the process, and identify what we collectively need to pay attention to throughout the workshops. Each workshop included grounding activities and process reflections led by Cian Knights. The following is a brief description of the activities at each of these workshops.

Orientation Workshop

At this workshop, participants received a high-level overview of the long-term redevelopment process, including where and how SPUHNTA could be meaningfully involved over time. The session also introduced the visioning workshops and the master planning process and gathered input on how to make the process inclusive, accessible, and community-driven.

Workshop 1

At this workshop, participants reviewed the development objectives and SPUHNTA's design principles developed through the previous SPUHNTA-led visioning exercise (2022–2023) and explored the site context analysis to examine the various factors that influence what is possible for the site. Building on this shared understanding, the group co-developed the first draft of a vision, consisting of core values and design principles that will shape and assist the evaluation of development concepts for the site.

Workshop 2

At this workshop, participants reviewed opportunities for redevelopment based on the draft vision and design principles. These opportunities were explored through massing drawings and visual precedents, including presentations of low, mid, and high-density massing options. Participants discussed the different options and reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of each, using the draft design principles as an evaluation guide.

Summary of Outcomes

Community Vision

The vision for the University Health Network (UHN) owned lands in South Parkdale, is to foster a thriving community grounded in the values of housing as a human right, dignity, wellbeing, and belonging. It will create inclusive, high-quality, and resilient homes and community spaces where residents live with comfort, exercise agency and autonomy, and feel connected and valued. This will be a place that supports individuals, diverse households, communities, and the local ecosystem to flourish for generations. Residents will play an ongoing role in shaping their community through meaningful participation in decision-making.

This vision and design principles were created through a shared process between the South Parkdale UHN Tenant Association (SPUHNTA), City of Toronto, and UHN. They bring together the policy framework of HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan, the UHN Social Medicine Housing Initiative, and the legacy of SPUHNTA's history, culture, and mutual aid. This vision and five interconnected design principles will inform and guide future redevelopment.

Summary of Outcomes

Design Principles

Growing from the Past and Planning for the Future

- New developments will be responsive to the existing context, and where possible, maintain familiar qualities of the existing streetscapes and structures.
- Apply an intergenerational mindset to design that honours the history of the community, while building for the future.
- Create dignified housing that demonstrates design excellence.
- Integrate innovative sustainability and climate resilience approaches to minimize environmental impact and prepare for future climate variability.

Providing Stable Affordable and Supportive Homes while Supporting Residents Through Transition

- Leverage public land to create new affordable and supportive homes within developments that are cost-effective and can attract intergovernmental investment.
- Provide diverse affordable housing options to support mixed-income communities, while prioritizing the housing needs of the most vulnerable, including UHN patients.
- Preserve livability for future generations through long-term housing affordability and social medicine supports.
- Provide existing SPUHNTA residents the opportunity to return to a replacement home in any future redevelopment, and support opportunities for the SPUHNTA community to continue living together during and after redevelopment.

Summary of Outcomes

Design Principles - continued

Building on Community and Connection

- New design that encourages connection across the community by inviting micro-interactions and gathering, shared use of common spaces, leveraging existing and new community networks, and being mindful of human scale.
- Support integration with the broader neighbourhood by creating spaces for informal interaction inside and outside, and activating the public and semi-public realm.
- Provide a diversity of shared spaces that enable community-building and connections for mutual aid.
- Explore opportunities for providing community benefits, including reference to the Parkdale Community Benefits Framework.

Generational Approach to Design and Inclusion

- New design that responds to needs of diverse households and cultural expressions.
- Flexible and adaptable design that can respond to how needs change over the lifetime, such as changing family sizes, abilities, or support needs, by providing diverse unit sizes and typologies, accessibility, universal design, and adaptable spaces.
- Create outdoor and nature-oriented spaces, both private and shared, that promote a diverse, resilient and healthy ecosystem for future generations.

Summary of Outcomes

Design Principles - continued

Centering the Voice and Agency of Residents throughout Redevelopment

- Support resident autonomy to make decisions regarding the form and function of their private spaces and shared spaces.
- Facilitate trust-building between residents, landlord, and communities with listening as a key element in trust-building.
- Support existing SPUHNTA residents during all phases of the redevelopment process to promote comfort and stability through an ongoing commitment to listening, responsiveness, transparency, and shared accountability, as conditions and needs evolve.
- Incorporate resident participation in decision-making on an ongoing basis.
- Support new models of shared living that foster tenant leadership and decision-making, such as shared governance and/or housing co-operatives.

Summary of Outcomes

Development Concept

The draft massing concept shows a phased development consisting of two separate buildings, with a smaller development at the southern portion of the site, and a larger, mid-scale development at the northern portion of the site.

Mid-density massing options were collectively recognized as offering the greatest flexibility to realize the design principles, including creating more housing opportunities, accommodating social medicine services, adding new amenities and community benefits, supporting diverse unit types, and fostering opportunities for community-building.

It was discussed that the development may proceed in two major phases due to funding considerations, however, it could also potentially be developed in one phase. The intent through this process was not to define exact zoning or building heights, but to present a range that demonstrates the applicability of the guiding principles identified through the discussion.

Considerations Shaping the Visioning Master Plan

City Council Direction

In 2020 and 2022, City Council directed staff to consult with tenants, community members and the Ward Councillor through a visioning and master planning process, to support the future redevelopment of the UHN-owned lands in South Parkdale and advance the City's commitments of building more affordable and supportive homes through the HousingTO Action Plan.

SPUHNTA's Visioning and Community Voice

Between 2022 and 2023, SPUHNTA undertook an independent visioning process that produced a collective vision that builds on and amplifies the strengths and unique qualities of the existing community, and reflects current tenants' needs and aspirations. This served as a key foundational reference for the workshops. The master plan vision and design principles explicitly recognize the importance of preserving the legacy of the SPUHNTA community, through physical design where feasible, sustained housing affordability, and the preservation of a culture of community-building and mutual aid within the redevelopment community.

Use of Public Land

There is a significant citywide need for affordable and supportive housing. Given that this site is public land, the City is committed to a development approach that builds efficiently and maximizes public benefit. As affordable housing has become increasingly difficult to secure through private development, capitalizing on the use of public land to deliver both housing and community benefits is essential.

HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan

The redevelopment will support the objectives of [HousingTO Action Plan](#), which positions the progressive realization of housing as a human right and includes commitments to providing access to safe, secure, and affordable housing for structurally vulnerable and marginalized individuals, including people experiencing homelessness.

Considerations Shaping the Visioning Master Plan - continued

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UHN and the City of Toronto

The MoU between UHN and the City, sets an objective of working together to create new supportive housing under a Social Medicine approach. The Social Medicine approach coordinates the delivery of healthcare and social services through supportive housing as exemplified through 90 Dunn Ave. (“Dunn House”) located adjacent to the lands subject to the visioning process.

Planning Requirements

The redevelopment must meet all applicable City and Provincial planning legislation and regulations. Zoning and other planning details will be determined through the formalized initiation of the redevelopment process.

Financial Viability

Funding considerations for any future redevelopment will have to account for contributions from multiple sources including federal, provincial, and municipal contributions and will inform the approach when securing a development partner. Mid to high-density development options tend to be the most efficient and financially viable, as they maximize available resources however, rising development costs and funding requirements may necessitate phased project delivery to maintain financial feasibility.

Community Benefits Framework

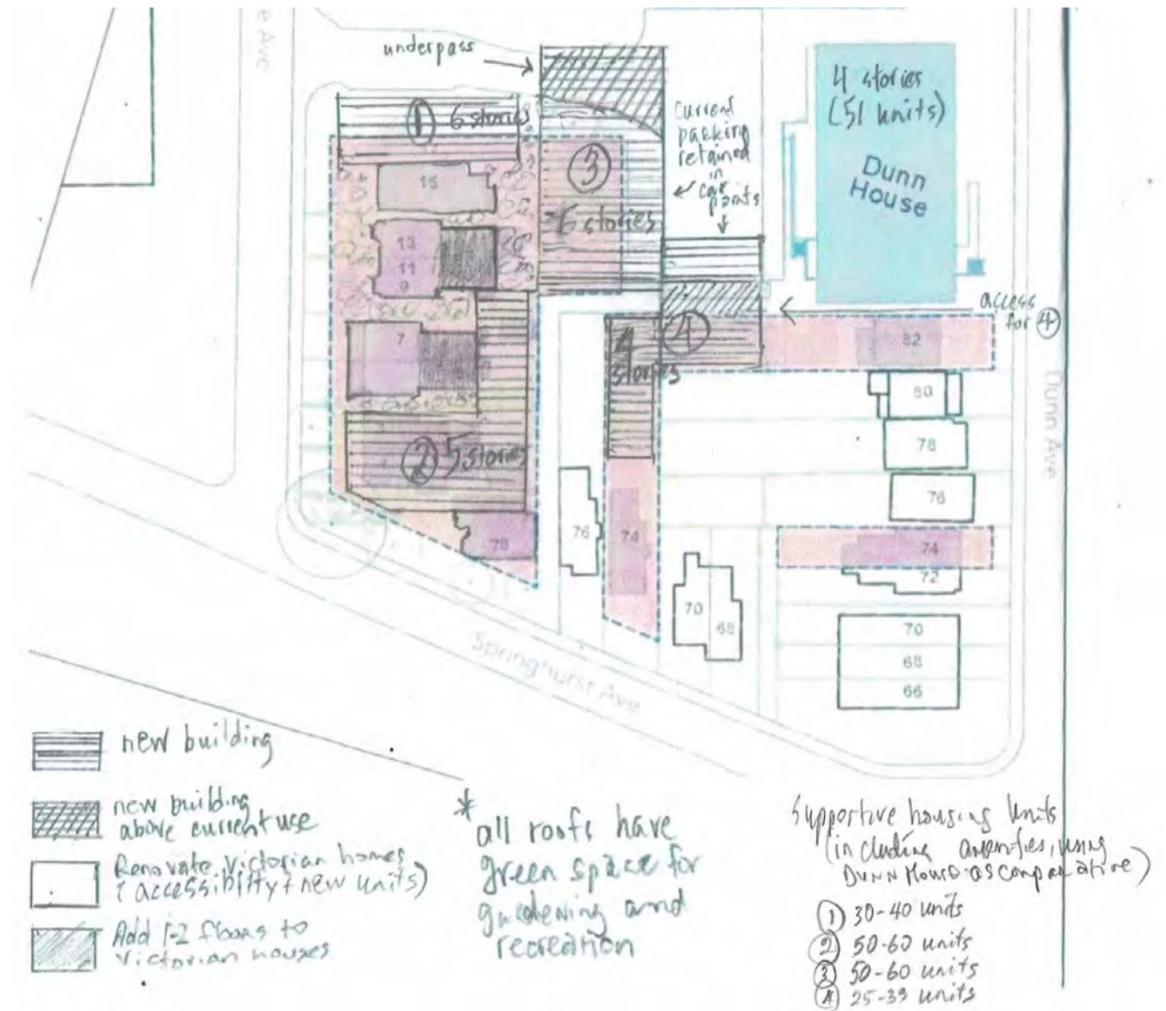
Embedding a community benefits framework within the vision has been raised as a desirable outcome of the redevelopment. This enables community and land-based assets to be included and protected. The [Parkdale Community Benefits Framework](#) was identified as a key reference for this development.

Additional Discussion Topics and Considerations

Preserving Victorian Houses

Participants reviewed a low-density development option that proposed retaining the Victorian houses in their current form while adding a limited amount of new housing. They also discussed an alternative option drawn by one of the SPUHNTA residents, which explored ways to increase density while preserving the Victorian houses. This option proposed adding building on land behind the Victorian houses, including laneways and a parking lot, as well as renovating and creating additions to the Victorian houses. SPUHNTA residents expressed a strong emotional connection to the Victorian houses, the surrounding community, and the land, and shared a sense of grief associated with the potential loss of these homes.

The discussion acknowledged the residents' deep attachment to the houses and recognized the benefits of the presented development options in maintaining an intimate scale and allowing for some additional density. However, these options were recognized as not being financially viable. Key constraints included insufficient density to deliver meaningful affordable and supportive housing, site limitations that restrict expansion, and challenges related to building code, height, and setback requirements.



Additional Discussion Topics and Considerations

Design Elements, Shared Resident and Community Spaces that Support the Vision

Through the review and discussion of the massing options and the refinement of design principles, workshop participants identified a number of physical design elements that can be incorporated into any development to realize the articulated vision. Furthermore, SPUHNTA residents were invited to specifically identify the shared resident and community spaces (available to the general public/community organizations) that would support the vision.

A strong emphasis was placed on using design to foster interaction, community-building, and connection to the surrounding neighbourhood. This includes flexible, welcoming indoor and outdoor spaces that encourage gathering, spontaneous interaction and shared activities, such as community kitchens and dining areas, gathering and party rooms, a rooftop garden, children's play areas, comfortable lounges, and a lobby that supports casual connection, among others. Residents also highlighted spaces that would support sharing and mutual aid, such as a shared pantry. Street-level design was also highlighted as critical, with support for housing types such as townhomes, and improved walkways to enhance connectivity within and beyond the site.

Another major area of focus was on design elements and amenities that support wellbeing, such as access to natural light, low-stimulation environments, and dedicated spaces for wellness and health practices. For the outdoor spaces, an emphasis was placed on naturalized and ecologically rich spaces as well as spaces that enable the integration of environmental sustainability into daily living, such as urban farming and outdoor clotheslines for air drying.

Community spaces accessible to the public or community organizations were identified as opportunities to address neighbourhood needs, such as gathering spaces, childcare, meeting and creative spaces, and amenities that support mutual aid, including food co-ops or tool libraries.

A detailed list of the identified spaces was provided to the City of Toronto.

Additional Discussion Topics and Considerations

Community Stability and Continuity Through the Redevelopment

Throughout the workshops, SPUHNTA residents emphasized that the redevelopment and relocation process has created significant discomfort, distress, and uncertainty, underscoring the need for a clearer and more structured framework to support residents in preparing for the future. Participants consistently highlighted the uniqueness of SPUHNTA as a tenant association and community, grounded in mutual aid, shared responsibility, and neighbour-to-neighbour support, and viewed this model as complementary to the UHN Social Medicine Housing Initiative.

Residents expressed concern not only about the potential loss of housing, but also about the risk of losing this established community and its living model. Interest was expressed in exploring a co-operative structure as a way to formally recognize and preserve SPUHNTA's model, provide greater stability during relocation, and ensure continuity and community empowerment through and beyond redevelopment. SPUHNTA members requested support to further explore co-operative models, and City staff confirmed interest in continued discussion, community partnership, and ongoing support throughout the redevelopment process.

Relocation and Support for SPUHNTA Residents Throughout the Redevelopment

SPUHNTA residents provided input on supports required throughout the redevelopment process, including if there is temporary relocation. The City committed to organizing a separate meeting with the relevant staff team dedicated to the City's rental replacement requirements and how it regulates the relocation process.

Balancing Integration and Support Needs

Participants highlighted the importance of further discussion on balancing integration and thoughtful support for individuals with higher needs when creating a community that includes diverse housing options. The discussion emphasized that the existing community's strength lies in integrated, mixed-income living, and that future designs should support inclusion while addressing varying support requirements.

Lessons Learned

The visioning workshops were a unique process demonstrating how communities and tenants can be trusted and central stakeholders in shaping shared planning and decision-making. The following process-related takeaways emerged from the engagement.

Capacity Building and Information Sharing

From the first workshop, SPUHNTA residents identified the importance of clarity about what is being planned and the constraints impacting what is possible. They also emphasized the need to build their capacity to understand redevelopment and planning processes. This was important in order to strengthen the residents' sense of agency in the decision-making around their homes. Residents highlighted that, as renters and as members of a community slated for redevelopment, they felt a limited sense of agency going into the process. The orientation workshop, suggested by residents, supported the initial information sharing and context setting.

To further support transparency and informed participation, project materials were shared with SPUHNTA residents several days in advance of each workshop to allow time for collective review and preparation. Clear communication mechanisms were also established between workshops to enable residents to ask questions, share feedback, and raise concerns on an ongoing basis. These measures underscored the importance of an intentional engagement process grounded in transparency, information sharing, and consistent communication.

It was also important to acknowledge and be responsive to power imbalances arising from differences in access to information and capacity between residents and institutional partners, with an emphasis on clear and transparent communication throughout the workshops. It is valuable to allocate sufficient time within engagement processes to create space for addressing these considerations in order to create meaningful shared decision-making.

Trust and Relationship Building

Trust-building was another key aspect of the process that required intentional time and attention. Power imbalances, as well as the history of institutional relationships, shaped how trust was built throughout the engagement. At one point, a decision was made to slow the process in order to attend to concerns related to trust and communication. This pause helped strengthen relationships between SPUHNTA and institutional partners, leading to more meaningful and constructive dialogue.